

TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
January 28, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 p.m.

INVOCATION: Pastor Roger Wills, Trinity Free Methodist Church

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: All members were present.

PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REMONSTRATIONS:

President Rick Bella asked Councilman Hardaway to please stand, we would like to present you with an award presented to Richard Hardaway Town Council President 2016-2019 by The Town Of Merrillville in appreciation for your 4 years of service and commitment as Town Council President.

President Bella received a communication through Pat Reardon about Chief Petruch who started his career through the Merrillville Police Department in 1979. So we would like to read this into the record. Madame Clerk-Treasurer would you please do that. From the Merrillville Police Department January 17, 2020 Pat Reardon Town Manager, Dear Mr. Reardon I would like to inform you of my intention to retire from the Merrillville Police Department, my last day in the office will be June 30, 2020. I began my career with the Merrillville Police Department in 1979, and it has been my honor to serve alongside so many professionals & it has been my privilege to serve the residents of The Town of Merrillville respectfully submitted, Joseph Petrich Chief of Police. President Bella said thank you Joe for a lot of years of service, we appreciate that.

The advance notice will give the Council enough time to make our moves hiring a new Police Chief getting him on staff and have some breathing room we want to thank you for that. Sometime in the future we will do a proper send off.

CONSENT AGENDA:

President Bella wanted to move to the consent agenda Councilman White mentioned there was a letter and President Bella said we are not doing that tonight.

Approval of the Accounts Payable Register Voucher Approval for January 28, 2020 Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2020. Councilman Pettit made a motion to approve and was seconded by Councilman Spann. There was no discussion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 voice vote.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

BUDGET & FINANCE:

Councilman White had no report.

PUBLIC WORKS:

Councilman Minchuk mentioned with the weather we've had the Public Works Dept. did a good job with the streets keeping them clean and salted. He said he met with the supervisors and personnel talking about some projects they were working on.

COUNCIL AFFAIRS:

Councilwoman Uzelac had no report.

PERSONNEL POLICY & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

Councilwoman Uzelac had no report.

PUBLIC SAFETY:

Councilman Minchuk mentioned how the police dept. has been busy he wanted to recognize all the hard work their doing on the streets and the town recognizes what you do and it will not be unforeseen. The Fire Dept. is still accepting applications this week. With the retirement of Chief Petruch I think we should take advantage of his experience hire the new guy as soon as possible so Chief Petruch can train him on what he does.

Councilman Hardaway mentioned about the vehicle break-ins lately 55th & Johnson, Councilman Hardaway wanted to encourage residents to lock their cars, and if you have doorbell security system please forward that to the police dept.

President Bella noticed the Police Officers in the audience and had a round of applause.

PARKS & RECREATION:

Councilwoman Uzelac had no reports.

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS:

Councilman White attended the Lake County Solid Waste District Board meeting last Thursday & we had elections, the chair person who was chosen was President C. Cid, Vice President is R. Long and the Controller is John Petalas. Also we approved the consent agenda with the approval of claims, also did a few ordinances & salary budgets two resolutions & created an independent contractor for grant writer & they hired her for \$30,000. Councilman White

also mentioned they paid \$300,000 for some kind of debt service when they got sued about 20 years ago their still paying on that.

ELECTIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Councilman Pettit reported they had a meeting at the Town Hall last Thursday at 5:00 to issue a community challenge neighboring communities that touch our boarder on a census challenge which would include Gary, Hobart, Crown Point, Schererville to join in. We had like 14 ideas that President Bella came up with. We're investigating prices we will be assessing billboard coverage in all the communities including my company at Lamar, chamber web site, banners across Broadway, bumper stickers, vehicles that don't move we will slap a bumper sticker on them, t-shirts for employees yard signs. Councilman Pettit mentioned that might have some pricing. President Bella mentioned every person counted represents \$27,100 coming back to our community in the form of street projects, schools, and a variety of things. So it's so important to get a complete count of our residents in our town.

Hobart & the Gary Mayor have accepted our challenge. So we will have fun with that coming up. So residents we need your help we lost the mall to Hobart because they were a city and we were a town so now's our chance to do a little pay back. So we need to have a better response rate. And our rate actually went down from the 2000 census to the 2010 census from 82% to 75%. Hobart was 82% so we have some work to do. So help us out you see signs spread the word so we get our correct count with the census. Really if the region does better we all do better.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Councilman Pettit reports we have a site visit tomorrow Pat Reardon and I, we work closely with the Lake County Economic Alliance and Pat is on the board as the Town Manager and this organization periodically will come to the town with site speculation of companies that want to locate in the Town of Merrillville. They usually start with Pat and I, I being the chairman of the committee. We work closely with Carol and Don and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. We do have a site visit tomorrow, and I also do know there are two pending tax abatements funneled through Mr. Reardon and I'll be calling a committee meeting on that probably in February.

UTILITY LIAISON:

Councilman Spann had no reports.

ABANDONED PROPERTIES:

Councilman White had no report.

TOWN IDENTITY & BEAUTIFICATION:

Councilwoman Uzleac had no report

COMMUNITY & RECREATION CENTER:

Councilman Minchuk and Councilman Pettit

Councilman Pettit reported they did have a committee meeting they met with the people from Core and Structure Point and went through a draft power point presentation going out to certain individuals for naming rights on the new Community Center that's being built. We're focusing on 2 versions of the power point, were looking one for an extremely large donor, and a menu of naming rights so it could be a sponsor on the rock climbing wall a sponsor on the fitness room, basketball courts might have logos on them that will help with the operating of the Community Center. We set another meeting for February 6th at 5:00 p.m. As we just heard we approved \$925,000 in claims all of us that has emails from Andrew Farmer gives us weekly updates, they're still working on the utilities with the mild winter we have been having, as well as the retention pond their continuing with the biggest capital improvement project we have ever seen. Councilman Pettit said it's probably going to be like Field of Dreams build it and they will come.

GENERAL ORDERS:

FIRST READING: (Discussion and Roll Call)

Ordinance (Discussion, Public Comment and Roll Call Vote)

SECOND READING:

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 20-01 (Discussion and Voice Vote)

Madame Clerk Treasurer read the Resolution 20-01 is a resolution to move some funds to accommodate some short falls in other funds, so this resolution moves some money from the general fund into other funds dedicated for our bonds for the debt service payments that had to be paid in January & February. Motion to approve by Councilman Pettit, seconded by Councilman Minchuk for approval of Resolution 20-01 transfer of funds. Madame Clerk-Treasurer mentioned in December when we got a disbursements we paid back all our loans & then the debt service came out in January and February and we had to pay them. It shortens our funds but it's all our money we just have to move it around a little bit.

Madame Clerk-Treasurer can you take the roll call:

Councilman Spann

Councilman Minchuk

Councilman Hardaway

Councilwoman Uzelac

Councilman Pettit

Councilman White

President Bella

7 yes motion carries

BZA ACTIONS:

No Report

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Richard Hardaway is going to serve on the NIPRC as Treasurer.

Board & Commission Appointments

Building Corporation & Redevelopment Community:

President Bella appointed: Councilman Pettit, Councilman Minchuk, Councilwoman Uzelac.

Nominated by council: Councilman White, Councilman Hardaway

Motion carries

Redevelopment Authority: Councilman Pettit, Councilman Minchuk, Councilwoman Uzelac

Council noimated: Councilman Don Spann

Motion carries

Councilman Minchuk nominated Gene Ward as Police Commissioner.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Grace Bullard 8350 Grant Circle Apt. 301D Merrillville, IN I’ve lived in this apartment for 9 years. We went on TV because there was a fire there last October I’m always on time with my rent, but now I’m being evicted & we all know why because I went on TV. Now they’re playing games with me which I don’t appreciate. They came into my apartment on the 6th never called me or anything I was taking a shower but they came to deliver my paper work because they’re not renewing my lease.

This is my care giver she helps me I’m a veteran, I have disabilities. Her & I came back home on the 19th about 7:55 the doors were open & the lights were on in the kitchen. She did file a police report the officer was very nice. Thank you. She mentioned her care giver had to go on the lease even though they weren’t going to renew her lease & made her pay \$45 for that. They have harassed her, ticketed cars. Her care giver said all the people who live there are scared, they shouldn’t be but they are. Councilman Pettit asked Shelia if they had a business license because the apartment exchanges money from the tenants. The town attorney suggested contacting HUD.

Graces care giver mentioned when the elevators went out they had to call the Fire Dept. To help the residents come down from the 3rd floor. Councilman Pettit mentioned that if they have a business license the council can bring the apartment in front of the council and tell them they would pull their business license if that’s how you’re going to operate. President Bella said we will have to have some time to look into it. Madame Clerk-Treasurer mentioned to call the Lake County Health Dept. and have an escort with the Chief of Police to go into the building.

Madame Clerk-Treasurer said contact an attorney because this falls under the elder abuse laws. President Bella asked who of you know Joan White. President Bella and Councilman White are meeting with Joan White on Thursday to see what the town can do to help senior renters in Merrillville. Madame Clerk-Treasurer suggested Fletcher Williams to join the meeting. The meeting is on Thursday at 11:00 here at the Town Hall. A fire started September 27 at approximately 8:00 because of a thunderstorm, the inspectors came out we went as a group and asked when the elevators were going to be back up & we could not get an answer. Councilman White said there’s mold on the walls & carpet.

Judy Stamps lives 8350 Grand Circle Apt. 105. Channel 7 was the only one that came out & asked us what we can do. So after we went on the air retaliation began. If their mother & father lived there what would they do? They don’t know how to talk to people. I really want to thank the fire dept. & police dept. they were so nice they treated us like family. One tenant Elizabeth Patterson mentioned this company Reliable Recovery Service, phone # 815-774-0880 this is out of Joilet said she has never lived like this before & she shouldn’t be living like this now.

Councilman Minchuk mentioned there’s a lot of different avenues opening up we have to look at here which way do we go & how we do it. Your wellbeing & health are important right now. I want all of you to call this number tomorrow. Lake County Board of Health 755-3655 they will probably get mad at me but this is important. We will be contacting one of our inspectors also. President Bell said Jody Bella 8779 Madison St. I just want to offer our seniors on aging they work with seniors on a variety of things including housing. President Bella said Jody works for Meals on Wheels and they deliver to your complex Monday through Friday. Thank you all for bringing it to our attention & believe me we will get into it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Storm water Management Board Meeting February 4th at 4:30 p.m.

Plan Commission Workshop Feb. 4th at 6:30 p.m.

Town Council Meeting Feb. 11th at 6:30 pm

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. White made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mrs. Uzelac.

Rick Bella, President

Kelly White Gibson, Clerk-Treasurer